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BASEBALL

Mets reportedly to offer Johnson a 2-year deal

From Chicago Tribune wires

LOS ANGELES—Instead of going to the World Series, New York Mets General Manager Frank Cashen now must decide who will go elsewhere.

Cashen's first decision is whether to retain Davey Johnson as manager.

According to the Associated Press, Johnson will be offered a two-year contract. The Mets plan to make the offer soon and Johnson is expected to accept, a source said.

Cashen also may be planning his trade bait.

The emergence of Gregg Jefferies at third base has left the Mets with too many infielders. Either Dave Magadan, Howard Johnson, Tim Teufel or Wally Backman will have to go—perhaps more than one.

The Mets platooned Len Dykstra and Mookie Wilson in center field, and neither likes the situation.

Catcher Gary Carter is 34 and coming off his worst season. He hit .242 with 11 home runs and 46 runs batted in. He also had lots of problems throwing out runners.

Rumors have swirled all season that the Mets are working on a deal that would bring San Diego catcher Benito Santiago to New York.

■ Los Angeles Dodgers left-fielder Kirk Gibson expects to be in the lineup for Game 1 of the World Series Saturday against the Oakland Athletics.

Gibson has struggled the last few weeks with a pulled left hamstring. Manager Tommy Lasorda pulled Gibson out of Wednesday's gamesgainst the Mets in the fourth inning after the Dodgers had built a six-run lead.

SERIES NOTEBOOK

■ Dave Parker, Oakland's designated hitter and sometime left-fielder, is thinking of 1989. "I've got a lot of things that I'm going to show the American League next year, both offensively and defensively," he said.

The six-time National League All-Star would like to show the American League his first season in it was not vintage Parker. He hit .257 and drove in 55 runs. The numbers weren't bad, considering he missed 44 games because of torn thumb ligaments.

"I think I've really got something to prove next year, and I'm coming out the door smokin'," Parker said.

■ World Series fever turned to Dodger blues as fans who waited hours in line at ticket booths discovered that tickets would be sold only by phone.

More than 100 people were in a line that stretched from the advance ticket office near Dodger Stadium out to Stadium Way when a security officer arrived with the bad news.

The announcement that the tickets would only be sold by Ticketron and Ticketmaster sent most of the all-nighters rushing for their cars.

"Waste of time," said Manuel Borjas.

"We can stay home and watch the game on TV and root for our team and buy beer for a lot less and eat food for a lot less," said Joe Cepeda. "We got cheated here, man."

AP Laserphoto

Davey Johnson leaves Shea Stadium Thursday morning amid reports the New York Mets will ask him to return as manager.

RADIO/TV

Garagiola will be trying for own Series victory

Joe Garagiola says he isn't a bitter man.

He has done everything NBC has asked of him for 28 years, be it host, pitchman, play-by-play man or baseball analyst, but the network has left him twisting in the wind over his future. And Garagiola, whose contract runs out at the end of this year, insists he isn't bitter.

Just a little befuddled as he is about to go into the broadcast booth as analyst for the last World Series NBC is scheduled to telecast under its current contract with the major leagues.

Instead of the full spotlight falling on the two teams involved, part of it is scraping the balding pate of Garagiola.

"No one has talked to me at all about next year," says Garagiola, 62. "It hasn't been an easy year for me."

It hasn't been easy because NBC Sports President Arthur Watson hasn't talked to him lately. It's no secret Watson courted Tim McCarver last year, only to lose out to ABC. McCarver's snappy performance in this year's National League playoff telecasts shows Watson has good taste.

To say, however, that McCarver is better than Garagiola is like saying Mozart is better than Beethoven. Or choosing a wine cooler over a hearty burgundy.

"I would like to ask him [Watson] if he really told [USA Today reporter] Rudy Martzke that I'd had a pretty good year and he'd wait till after the World Series to make a decision," Garagiola says.

"It's totally unfair. I called Arthur in the middle of the year to ask how I was doing. He said, 'With me, no news is good news.' I take him at his word. To base it [a contract decision] on the World Series is totally unfair."

It's kind of sad to listen to the funny man who turned a collection of baseball quips into a small fortune and fame. But he says he's not bitter. And the enthusiasm he still exhibits for the game in many ways shows it, including his work recently for BAT (Baseball Alumni Team, a fundraising organization that helps indigent former players).

"I love baseball," he says. "It's my life. I'll stand up against anybody in my work ethic. I get excited going to the game. I enjoy baseball, and I'll enjoy the World Series.

"I'm not bitter at all. There's a great expression . . . I love TV. Everything I have I owe to TV. But I'm not at the mercy of TV.

"I've had the wind blowing my way enough to know I'll be working somewhere next year."

Garagiola says Vin Scully, his baseball partner since 1982, "would love to see the relationship go on. We're friends, we talk about things. I don't understand how I got in this position."

Garagiola has been an NBC fixture since 1961, sandwiching chores as a "Today" host and game-show emcees around his baseball assignments. This will be his ninth World Series assignment.

So what was Garagiola's mistake? Making a few extra bucks doing commercials for Chrysler? Emceeing inane game shows? Getting old? Not being Tim McCarver? Because, through it all, he's been the Good Joe, the loyal soldier plugging away for the good of the network, the wealthy former ballplayer trying to raise money for those who may have been more talented but now find themselves less fortunate.

■ Bowing to pressure from hockey (and Wayne Gretzky) fans, Sports-Vision has added the Philadelphia Flyers-Los Angeles Kings game to its Saturday schedule. The 9:30 p.m. contest follows the Blackhawks-Hartford Whalers game.

■ Illinois-Chicago hockey and basketball games will be broadcast for the third straight season on WGCI-AM, starting with the Flames' CCHA opener Friday against Ohio State at 7 p.m. Les Grobstein will do play-by-play, with Chris Madsen helping on hockey and J.J. Jackson on basketball.

■ From the what-in-the-world-are-people-watching department comes this oddity: Last Sunday night's NL playoff game, perhaps one of the two or three best ever, received a 14.3 Arbitron rating, making it only the fifth-highest rated sports program of the week. The No. 1 slot, with a 30.1 rating, was the *first* Mets-Dodgers game Oct. 4. Go figure.

■ It may be a first—and some spouses will hope it's a last—but ESPN has a live college football "quadruple-header" on tap for Saturday. When you toss in the pre-game "College GameDay" at 10:30 a.m., it comes to nearly 14 straight hours. The games, which start at 11:30 a.m., are Harvard at Dartmouth, Duke at Clemson, Syracuse at Penn State and Utah State at Fresno State.

■ Elsewhere at ESPN, the "Best of the Bears" will be featured Sunday at 7:15 p.m. on "NFL Scrapbook." . . . The Holly Farms 400 stock-car race, postponed twice by rain, will be shown live from North Wilkesboro, N.C., Sunday at 11:50 a.m. . . . And five steeplechase racing will be presented for the first time Friday at 2 p.m. on the we'll-televise-any-sport network when it shows the Queen Mother Supreme Novice Chase from Nashville, Tenn.

Series

Continued from page 1

Dukakis in Pauley Pavilion.

A few hundred delirious fans rushed from their Dodger Stadium seats to join their heroes in a post-game celebration of Los Angeles' conquest of the Mets Wednesday evening. But they were dwarfed in number by the thousands who had left the park earlier in the evening to avoid the traffic congestion.

The pennant-clinching celebration in Oakland's Coliseum last Sunday was even more tepid, a marked contrast to the riotous—and drunkenly violent—revelry that has greeted sports victories in such cities as New York, Chicago and Detroit.

"People know what's going on, but they are pretty subdued," said Sam Buba, the 27-year-old owner of a downtown Oakland newsstand. "Maybe we're just waiting to go all the way. Maybe the playoffs weren't enough."

The proprietor of a sports souvenir shop in Oakland was equally perplexed. "In some cities, people go crazy right from the start," said Bahman Shafa.

In Los Angeles, where the Dodgers were widely projected to finish in the middle of the pack in the National League West, the fans' reserve may have been rooted in a lingering disbelief that the team could advance this far.

Richard Meltzer addressed that prevailing civic doubt in a recent essay entitled "L.A. is the Capital of Kansas," asserting that Dodger fans "have a real on-off switch. Here, people can't adjust to adversity, they just change channels."

But Meltzer, who abhors the lack of loyalty, is even more repulsed by Los Angeles' smug embrace of a winner. "In a town where illusion is the chief product, the Dodgers are purveyors of the same thing—the illusion of superiority," he charged. "In New York, sports fans have a sense of proportion. There is not the same arrogance when they win. Sports wins in L.A. make people even stupider than they are already."

But the switched-on former exponent of mind-altering drugs, Timothy Leary, argued that Dodger adherents are in fact far more prudent and knowledgeable than fans who live and die with their sports heroes.

"The concept of belief is feudal," said Leary. "Dodger Blue is like the tooth fairy, a totem for our local tribal team. People here are 1,000 times more sophisticated than New Yorkers. They know the sports team winning is not the whole thing.

"The Jews," he added, "is entertainment."

And so, let the show begin.

HORSE RACING

Jockey Mike Venezia killed in accident at Belmont Park

From Chicago Tribune wires

NEW YORK—Jockey Mike Venezia, who was planning to retire at the end of the year, was killed Thursday when struck by a horse after falling or jumping from his mount in the fifth race at Belmont Park.

Fans silently shuffled out of the track after being informed of the fatal accident, and the other jockeys dressed quickly and waved off reporters as they left, many of them clearly choking back tears.

Mr. Walter K., a 3-year-old gelding, appeared to stumble slightly at the start, then moving down the backstretch he stumbled once more, breaking his right foreleg. As Venezia attempted to pull up Mr. Walter K., the jockey went off the horse to his left and fell onto the inner grass course directly in the path of Drums in the Night, who kicked Venezia in the head.

Robbie Davis, who rode Drums in the Night, was taken to a hospital in shock. Drums in the Night escaped injury. Mr. Walter K. was destroyed.

Dr. Leo Skolnick, head of Belmont's First Aid Unit, said Venezia's right eye was knocked out.

Venezia, 43, was the fourth jockey to be injured fatally in the last 27½ years in New York. Roy Gilbert was killed April 4, 1961, Sidney Cole on July 11, 1967, and Amado Credido on March 29, 1982, all at Aqueduct. Gilbert and Credido were killed in races and Gilbert during a workout.

Venezia had ridden more than 2,000 winners in a 25-year-old career. He won three major races in Chicago: the Round Table Handicap with Pass the Drink in 1970, the Secretariat with Sing Sing in 1981 and the Arlington Handicap with Who's For Dinner in 1984. Among his other victories were the Alabama on White Star Line in 1978, the Gotham on Air Forbus Won in 1982, the Jim Dandy on Finther Hogan in 1979 and Music of Time in 1977 and the Sanford on Az Iguai in 1973.

He is survived by wife, Helene; a son, Michael; and a daughter, Alison.

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